LONDON is the great capital of Britain. The name is Celtic, but the city is Roman: it was a Roman foundation, a legacy to the future; and in Roman times alone it quickly became one of the largest known cities, and the oldest city ahead of the English-speaking world. London is also the most cultured capital of Europe—of which the proof is not only in the great libraries, public and general, institutional and specialised, but also the great museums, and the great art galleries. In London one only has to walk a few hundred yards to discover a variety with no end—bookshops of every interest, antique shops, art dealers, art galleries of diverse kinds and auction houses. While the British Museum may justly claim to be the greatest museum of all, the Sir Percival David Foundation has the greatest Chinese imperial ceramics collection known and enjoyed in the West, since it was opened to the public on June 10th, 1952 in a house in Gordon Square, Bloomsbury, London. It is therefore most fitting that these two distinguished institutions have joined together to showcase Sir David’s wonderful pieces.

On April 21st, 2009 the British Museum will be celebrating the official opening by HRH The Duke of Gloucester, Royal Patron of the British Museum and the Oriental Ceramic Society, of its new major gallery: The Sir Percival David Collection in the Sir Joseph Hotung Centre for Ceramic Studies. The public opening is April 23rd, and the British Museum has free admission. The outstanding Sir Percival David Collection of Chinese ceramics went on permanent public display in the specially designed new gallery developed thanks to the generosity of Sir Joseph Hotung. Containing some 1700 items of Chinese ceramics from the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties (the 10th to the early 20th century), the Sir Percival David Collection is unparalleled in quality outside China. The display at the British Museum of this extraordinarily rich material allows six million or more visitors a year access to the finest collection of Chinese ceramics outside Beijing, Shanghai or Taipei, Taiwan. The public gallery is an important part of the Sir Joseph Hotung Centre for Ceramic Studies, which includes facilities for the use of the collection for teaching.

So I am very proud to present this very special issue of *Arts of Asia*, May–June 2009 magazine, which has all its many articles written by international academics, experts in their fields, and has taken us two years to prepare. It records the transfer of the world-renowned Sir Percival David Collection of Chinese ceramics to the British Museum as an important feature and exhibition display of the new Sir Joseph Hotung Centre of Ceramic Studies. The original suggestion and recommendation of ourselves as the publishers of the special issue came from Carol Michaelson, the curator of Sir Joseph Hotung’s collections. As you will see from the contributors’ biographies on page 3 of the magazine, Carol Michaelson has worked at the British Museum since 1990, where she is an Assistant Keeper.

Carol Michaelson, who started the ball rolling, followed by talking to Jan Stuart, Keeper of Asia at the British Museum, another contributor to this magazine, and formerly a curator at the Freer Gallery and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. Jan Stuart suggested further articles by Jessica Harrison-Hall, Regina Krahl (independent scholar) and Stacey Pier-
son at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Rose Kerr, a prolific author on East Asian Culture, is a former Keeper of the Far Eastern Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum and a Past President of the Oriental Ceramic Society; while Rosemary Scott, whose contributions are keenly appreciated by our readers, is the former Curator of the Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, and International Academic Director of Christie’s Asian Art Departments. Rosemary is also the current President of the Oriental Ceramic Society. (Perhaps I should mention that the three ladies Stacey Pierson, Rose Kerr and Rosemary Scott are former students of the Percival David Foundation.)

The British Museum possesses approximately 8000 Chinese ceramics and yet in almost every category, including “five classic wares of the Song dynasty” (906–1279), imperial cobalt blue and overglaze enamel decorated porcelain wares, the Sir Percival David Collection visually complements and expands the museum’s holdings and research programme. When Tang Ying (1682–1756), the celebrated Imperial Factory Superintendent, was sent to Jingdezhen in 1726 he started fine-tuning classic shapes and designing new ones. With rose-pink now prominent, the new style became known as fencai (powder colours) in China, and famille rose in the West. The Yongzheng (1723–1735) moon flask, seen on the issue’s cover and in the articles, echoes its underglaze-blue Yongle (1403–1424) prototype.

Long-time subscribers to Arts of Asia will appreciate being reminded of our first major coverage of the Sir Percival David Foundation that appeared in the January–February 1989 issue. The elegant cover of that special and now out of print edition featured a beautiful and rare 12th–13th century guan ware bottle vase with pear-shaped body, slender neck and metal-bound mouth and foot-ring. Incidentally in my Editorial for that number I first mentioned an exhibition of the paintings of Ting Yen-yung (Ding Yanyong) held at Plum Blossoms in Hong Kong. Featured was the cover of the 75-page exhibition catalogue which included fifty-nine paintings illustrated in colour, a range of artist’s seals and preface by Plum Blossoms (Int’l) Ltd American proprietor Stephen McGuinness.

Twenty years later Dr Raymond Tang, Assistant Curator (Chinese Fine Art) of the Hong Kong Museum of Art, has written an article for our readers about Ding Yangyong (1902–1978). This Chinese artist was born in Guangdong and I can still vividly recall, before the artist’s death in 1978, seeing many of his fluid works regularly hanging for sale on the walls of the Swindon Book Company in Kowloon, Hong Kong. Swindon has been selling Arts of Asia publications since our foundation and preview issue in 1970, when it was the first English language magazine published in Hong Kong devoted to Asian art and culture.

This unique edition also includes an excellent Islamic art article by Lucien de Guise, Curator of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, up-to-date Saleroom News reports, and other interesting regular features. I truly feel that our carefully prepared Editorial coverage and high-quality advertisements come together beautifully in this special issue and they will surely be enjoyed as a whole by Arts of Asia readers and friends both today and for many years to come.
Over forty contemporary artists were represented at Feng-Chun Ma’s exhibition and sale, “Stars of China—Past and Present”, held at Museum Jan van der Togt, in Amstelveen (near Amsterdam) from January 29th until March 22nd, 2009. Feng-Chun Ma, an expert and consultant of Chinese and Japanese art, said, “In various and diverse ways the works by these artists refer to China’s historical, cultural, political and social past. They contrast sharply with the current consumer society, which is satirised in several of the works.”

The exclusive opening ceremony, performed by Mr. Jochum S. Haakma, former Dutch Consul General in Hong Kong (1997–2002) and Shanghai (2002–2007), was sponsored by Staalbankiers, a Dutch private bank. Over two hundred VIPs and important clients in attendance were exposed not only to internationally famous artists such as Yue Minjun, the most representative of cynical realism, but also young and up-and-coming artists who have the potential of making an international breakthrough.

I would like to congratulate Feng-Chun for curating a well-attended and successful event that was widely reported by local media in The Netherlands. It took two years to organise but she was delighted when visitors told her they enjoyed the refreshing show juxtaposing over one hundred paintings and works by new Chinese artists as well as a selection of fine antique sculptures from China.

On Tuesday March 3rd, 2009 I gave an informal presentation to twenty-eight of the thirty active members from the Qiu Chi Society of Hong Kong at Very Good Seafood Res-
Tuyet Nguyet receives warm applause from members of the Qiu Chi Society of Hong Kong at the start of her Arts of Asia magazine presentation.

Dr Liu Bing Fai of the Qiu Chi Society (the name in Chinese means the Quest for Knowledge) said, “The society was founded in 1975 and I am now the Chairman of the Executive Committee. Members of the Committee are elected every two years, and the one with the most votes becomes the Chairman. In the past twenty-five years, our membership number has grown from fewer than ten to more than thirty. Members come from different walks of life: businessmen, bankers, doctors, lawyers, accountants, but they have one thing in common—the passion for arts. The goal of our cultural group, as our name suggests, is to attain knowledge on arts and to promote art appreciation.

“As for our activities, we hold regular meetings in the evening of the first Tuesday of every month. During the meetings, experts in different fields of arts will give lectures. Members will also bring along their own art pieces for appreciation and discussion. In every spring, we will also arrange a cultural tour around Hong Kong. Every now and then, our society will pay visits to the cultural relics in mainland cities such as Beijing, Xian and Guangzhou. In 2008 we were invited to attend the First Global Conference of Chinese Art Collectors held in Shanghai. More than twenty of our members participated at this event, forming the largest delegate group from outside mainland China, and we are eager to join the Second Conference next year.”

Poly International Auction Co., Ltd would like to announce that their spring exhibition and auctions will be held on May 25th, 2009 at New Poly Plaza, Beijing. One of the sessions features eighteen important Chinese paintings from the collection of Mr Guy Ullens. Eleven are Chinese ancient art pieces along with four great modern paintings and three representative artworks by famous Chinese contemporary artists. Mr Ullens will use the proceeds to finance future collection acquisitions and also support the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art. Illustrated is Orchid Pavilion by Chinese modern painter Fu Baoshi (1904–1965) when he was forty years old. This painting depicts the famous historical scene where scholar Wang Xizhi from Eastern Jin dynasty and his friends underwent a cleansing ritual at the Orchid Pavilion.

Georgia Chrischilles has informed me that the fifth Brussels Oriental Art Fair (BOAF) will take place from June 4th–7th, 2009 and private viewings on June 3rd. Twenty-five galleries will host Asian art exhibitions attracting collectors, experts and curators to Brussels. Galerie Christophe Hioco from Paris will put the spotlight on Indian art with sculptures of Buddhist and Hindu art. Amongst these pieces is a 12th century dark grey schist stele of Vishnu from the Bihar region of India. The gallery will also display very interesting pieces from Vietnamese archaeology such as a bronze receptacle on a tall latticed foot from the Giao-Chi era, circa 1st century, height 30 cm. Also exhibiting is Italian dealer Renzo Freschi from Milan. One of the best pieces he will show in Brussels is a beautiful 9th–10th century Indian sandstone sculpture of Vishnu, height 112 cm. I wish Georgia and all the exhibitors a very successful fair.